



Contact Robb Layne
Telephone 916-556-3477
Email rlayne@cbhda.org

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PUBLIC CHARGE RULE PUTS THE MENTAL WELLBEING OF CALIFORNIANS AT RISK

Sacramento, CA – The County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA) expressed deep concern today over the Trump Administration’s publication of the new “public charge” rule on Monday. The federal policy, set to go into effect in October 2019 barring legal action, expands the circumstances upon which certain immigrants can be denied green cards or visas if they use public services, including a now expanded list of services crucial to basic human survival and wellbeing, including health care, housing, and nutrition support. CBHDA released the following statement from Michelle Doty Cabrera, Executive Director:

“County behavioral health directors are concerned about the potential for the public charge rule to deter our clients from accessing the vital mental health and substance use disorder services necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Californians. In addition, we are concerned that these policies create additional stress and anxiety among immigrant families, which has a detrimental impact on the mental health and wellbeing of immigrant families throughout California.”

Almost half of all California children have at least one parent who is foreign born, and California is home to over a quarter of the nation’s immigrants. “Research tells us that growing up with the hunger and stress of poverty threatens children’s mental health throughout their lifetime. At a time when homelessness is a top concern of Californians, denying housing to families in need of shelter will exacerbate our existing crisis and further strain our behavioral health safety net.”

“Counties will be working together to help affected communities throughout California to link them to legal resources. We must ensure that those in need of help, regardless of their immigration status, can continue to access behavioral health services.”

The County Behavioral Health Directors Association is a statewide non-profit association that represents all 58 county behavioral health directors and 2 city mental health programs (Berkeley and Tri-City) which is dedicated to advocating for public policy and services on behalf of people who are living with substance use disorders and mental illness.

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